

2/20/2025

My name is Rachel Chang and I am currently a second year pediatric dental resident. I am in favor of HB771.

During my residency, I have seen many children who have not had their first dental visit until it is too late. Many patients are unaware of the importance of dental visits and do an emergency walk in only when they have pain, causing them to be unable to eat, unable to sleep, and even have swelling so extensive on their face that requires overnight stays at the hospital to receive IV antibiotic treatment. The American Association of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children are seen by the age of 12 months or when the first tooth is seen. However, due to lack of awareness regarding oral health, our residency program has had children even at the age of 7 or 8 years old come in because they have pain. When they come in at 7 or 8 years old, the extent of decay is so severe that it may require extractions on every tooth. The extensive dental treatment requires multiple dental visits, causing students to miss multiple days of school, along with the abrupt and invasive procedures causing negative and traumatic experiences for children, affecting their developing psyche.

I do not believe that children should be penalized for not visiting the dentist. However, it is important to bring awareness the importance of dental health and consistent dental visits. Every child is expected to go to school and the pediatrician, but not every child is expected to go to the dentist. This mindset needs to change.

Having the 3 simple question screening regarding dental visits can be the first opportunity for parents to become aware of expectations and needs for their child. Every parent deserves the right to provide the best care but this can only be achieved if parents know about these opportunities. It also serves as an opportunity for patients to establish a dental home, if they have not done so already, and receive proper care. Thank you.